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Applications are invited for the following position:

CALL FOR GRADUATE AND POST-GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCHERS (1 POST)

The Assignment:

TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY PAPER ON DIGITAL AND E-COMMERCE SOLUTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES THROUGH FOOD VALUE CHAINS AND TERRITORIAL RESILIENCE

The Centre for Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa (CURLA) was established in February 2023 by University of Nairobi and UN-HABITAT as a centre of excellence in the African region to provide an institutional environment conducive to innovative and multidisciplinary research. CURLA will outreach to society through capacity building, mentoring of students as well as supporting research-informed policy making within a framework of integrating spatial, sectoral and territorial development efforts.

THE CALL

CURLA is recruiting a graduate or post-graduate student under its **Mentorship Program** of the Centre to prepare a **strategy paper** with selected cases from East Africa and beyond as appropriate. The aim is to host short-term graduate or post-graduate student mentee interested to further explore specific aspects of areas of interest through research, publication and dissemination within the objectives, mission and vision of CURLA in collaboration with partners. The expected outcome of this assignment will be a **strategy paper on digital and e-commerce solutions for strengthening urban-rural linkages through food value chains and territorial resilience**. This is an open call for applicants from Universities and research centres in and outside Kenya.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Duration of Assignment: The term of the assignment is 3 months and the mentee will be answerable to CURLA project lead.

Purpose: The purpose of the digital /e-commerce solutions paper is to provide stakeholders including youth, entrepreneurs and other actors with case-based strategies to optimize digital solutions with potential to strengthen food value chains and conserve biodiversity in the flows of goods, services, capital, information and people across the urban-rural continuum. The strategy paper will be a contribution to deepen local resilience and adaptation to change, including the climate crisis in East Africa.

OBJECTIVES

The paper will:

- Explore the potential of existing social networks and related technological advancements in the current and expanding digital economy. Applications might include digital learning and marketing platforms, artificial intelligence (AI) and decentralized networks, producer-to-producer and producer-to-consumer/market communications. Digital innovations also include precision agriculture, remote sensing and online capacity development for small and medium scale producers, food enterprises and cooperatives to bridge urban-rural gaps and promote sustainable development.
- Discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with adopting and implementing technology-driven solutions in East African intermediary cities including for the food and nutrition systems, with emphasis on youth in cities, and on African centres of expertise and innovation.
- Document evidence, cases and examples of digital economy solutions to strengthen urban-rural linkages
- Identify ways to enhance access to technology and digital literacy, particularly for locally developed and owned, decentralized and use of IT and AI in incubating and accelerating innovation in both urban and rural areas.

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES FOR THE ASSIGNMENT

Research for the paper includes gathering information from interviews and/or targeted survey related to the topic supplemented by in-depth desk research. The selected mentee graduate or post-graduate author will be expected to provide a detailed report from these different sources to a group of advisors and peer reviewers who will provide guidance and direct the scope of the strategy paper. Initial framing will be provided by CURLA and UN-Habitat.

PROCESS OF PRODUCING THE STRATEGY PAPER

Upon selection, there will be a first inception meeting with advisors to go over the outline, methodology for developing the paper. The first draft will consist of the results from desktop research and in-depth interview/survey and is expected within **two weeks** for a virtual “writer’s workshop” with the author and advisors. A second draft will be expected in another **two weeks** that synthesizes the background information from the research and case studies to provide strategies for applications of digital technologies for food flows between urban and rural communities. The full first draft will be shared with peer reviewers in advance of an expert group meeting (EGM) in **mid-April**. The author(s) may be asked to present the paper at the EGM. The final draft will be due to CURLA by **mid-May**.

Requirements: The candidate is **required** to have writing, research, feedback incorporation, attention to detail, adherence to deadline and team-work collaboration skills. Expertise in the subject matter will be an added advantage.

- **Writing Skills:** Exceptional English language writing skills with a focus on clarity, coherence, and engaging content, Ability to translate complex information into easily understandable content, Strong organizational skills to structure the paper logically and cohesively.
- **Research Skills:** Strong research skills to gather information from various sources and experts and ability to synthesize information to create comprehensive and accurate content.
- **Attention to Detail:** Meticulous attention to detail, ensuring accuracy and correctness in all written materials.
- **Team Collaboration:** Ability to work collaboratively with a team of advisors and peer reviewers to achieve content accuracy in the subject matter of the strategy paper.
- **Feedback Incorporation:** Willingness to receive feedback and make revisions to improve content and quality.
- **Deadline Adherence:** Demonstrated ability to meet tight deadlines without compromising the quality of work.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Advanced degree in a relevant field (e.g., English, Communication, or a related discipline).
- Proven experience in technical or instructional writing, preferably in the form of research and strategy papers or manuals for practitioner audiences.

Remuneration: A stipend of USD 1500 will be paid for the assignment with 50% after the first draft and 50% upon completion. The author will be invited to participate in the April 2024 EGM and present the work.

- Applicants should email their application letter, and curriculum vitae (CV) and a sample of their work (one page)
- Applications and related documents should be forwarded addressed to Prof. Isaac Karanja, The CURLA Project Lead. Email: curla@uonbi.ac.ke

EXTENDED CLOSING DATE: MONDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2024

NOTE: *This is an extended deadline. Those who have already submitted their applications need not re-submit*

The selected candidates will be notified by email and invited to an inception meeting in the second week of February.